DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 348 855 FL 020 475

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TITLE An Uncommon Internship: Exploring Options in Careers Enhanced by Foreign Language Skills.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 12p.; In: Acting on Priorities: A Commitment to Excellence. Dimension: Languages '90. Report of Southern Conference on Language Teaching; see FL 020 470.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Awareness; *Career Exploration; Higher Education; Instructional Materials; *Internship Programs; Language Teachers; Program Descriptions; Program Design; *Resource Materials; Second Language Instruction; *Second Languages; Teacher Education; Teacher Role; Work Experience
IDENTIFIERS *Macon College GA

ABSTRACT

Foreign language teachers must do some career counseling if their students are to be informed about the choice of profession and application of foreign language skills and knowledge. Because most teachers do not have time or resources to do full-scale counseling, Macon College (Georgia) has instituted an internship program for foreign language students to address the problem. The program is adapted from one that is business- and experience-oriented and provides about 140 hours of on-the-job experience. Students use the experience to (1) research and develop a project about the job market and positions in which foreign language skills are essential or desirable, do a project directly related to their own interests, or work in the foreign language program; and (2) review and practice language skills already acquired while adding others. Materials are provided for internship students going into teaching and researching other professions. These include career-specific, language-related, and cultural or cross-cultural materials. During its brief history, student projects have reflected interest in a variety of fields. Students keep a log of their activities and readings. Students have responded positively to the experience. While the program adds some responsibilities for the supervising teacher, it can also help reaffirm teacher commitment to foreign language mastery. (MSE)

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AN UNCOMMON INTERNSHIP: EXPLORING OPTIONS IN CAREERS ENHANCED BY FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS

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Language as a liberating force, both in our lives and in our profession, was a theme in the inspirational message of Maya Angelou's Keynote Address at the 1990 ACTFL/-SCOLT Conference. Freedom and liberty are valued in the United States, and we will do much to protect, defend or promote these ideals. Consequently, we all contend that our students are "free" and that they have choices regarding what they do with their lives. Is it possible that we could enable them to enjoy their "freedom" even more? Could they apply and enjoy their language skills to a greater degree in a career of their choosing?

While career counseling is not inherently a part of every foreign language teacher's duties, it is essential that foreign language teachers assume such a role if they want their students to be informed and truly free in the choice of a profession and in the application of skills and knowledge acquired in the study of a foreign language. Most foreign language teachers, however, have neither the time nor the means of running a full-scale counseling service nor of acquiring and cataloging career information useful to students. An internship program is one way to address the problem on the college level. This description will present

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one such program through introductory information and sample "case studies."

The overall internship program at Macon College is actually business- and experience- oriented, and is set up to carry five credit hours, which cannot be used to satisfy core or degree requirements. Generally, it provides around 140 hours of on-the-job training. Permission was obtained to use this career internship option for foreign language students. Through this program, students are able to apply research skills in the real world and to plan for their future. In addition, they also have an opportunity to review and enhance their language skills through an individualized review which they design with the help of the director of the internship.

The internship program for foreign language students was initiated at Macon College in September, 1989. By the end of Spring Quarter 1991, sixteen students will have used this means to do the following:

a. research and develop a project about the job market and positions in which foreign language skills are considered essential/desirable, develop a project which relates directly to their own interests, or work in the foreign language program; and

b. review/practice language skills which they have already acquired while adding related skills which they will need (e.g., knowledge of culture and customs or the acquisition of specialized vocabulary). To quote an old adage: "Necessity is the mother of invention. "The decision to develop an internship opportunity

> for foreign language (FL) students was made to enable students with a solid FL background (usually from their high school studies to continue on an appropriate level in college without interruption. In the past, students were signing up for beginning Spanish in the fall quarter because it was the only Spanish offered; some had studied for as long as four years in a high school foreign language program.

As enrollment grows in the more advanced courses, and as placement procedures are developed which enable students to study in those courses in any given quarter, adjustments will be made in the FL internship. However, its success and the benefits students have gained from it warrant keeping the internship as an option for students of a foreign language to become familiar with career options--especially for those who want to use foreign language skills to enhance their marketability in areas such as business or the health professions. Currently, students in 101 may elect to participate in the program and are tested to confirm that they do not need the beginning Spanish course; they simply review their skills. FL majors or minors have the option of developing an individualized project or of working in the area of foreign language instruction for job-related experience (fourteen-hour per week minimum).

THE DESIGN OF THE PROGRAM

The guidelines found in the Macon College catalog were developed for the job-related internship. They are generally followed for the FL internship. However, some freshmen have been accepted into the program with less

than the required fifteen credit hours of college work if their high school academic records and recommendations have indicated that they were mature, serious students capable of independent study. The five hours of credit which internships carry cannot apply to the Associate of Arts Degree requirements, but can provide students with documented work-related experience. Generally, the description of the program found in the MC Internship Program brochure represents all aspects of the FL internship. The brochure describes the overall program through the following questions and answers: What can an internship do for you?

-- Help you make a career choice.
-- Allow you to earn college credit while you are working.
-- Prepare you for the world of work.
-- Give you on-the-job experience.
-- Establish important career contacts.
-- Give you the extra edge in the job market after graduation.

Why do an internship now?

An internship provides practical career experience and in sight. An early internship will help you make the proper career choice before you have invested too much time and money.

What requirements must you meet to be an intern?

1. You must have completed 15 hours of credit at MC.

2. You must have a minimum 2.0 Grade Point Average.

3. You must be approved by the prospective employer, faculty instructor, and the coordinator of the Internship Program.

The FL internship requires a project and differs from internships in other discipline areas since some students are not actually "on the job" but are preparing themselves for employment while researching potential employment or completing a project which has been approved by the internship director. All too often, students do not have an opportunity to apply their research skills in the real world, and the business of "finding employment" is relegated to a job placement office. Students need to know how to locate potential employers and how to prepare for the requirements of those employers. Such knowledge will enable them to do their best when they are ready for employment.

CAREER MATERIALS TO SUPPORT THE FL INTERNSHIP

For students other than those going into teaching, materials have been gathered and placed at their disposal. Of these materials, the FL interns in the MC program have found that the career guides and source books (of employers with international firms or business interests in Georgia) which were developed by Dr. Nancy Kason at the University of Georgia in Athens, are extremely beneficial. Two interns who worked together in the fall of 1989 decided to develop a federal government resource notebook

as their project. It is now available for other students and includes employment brochures and guides published by federal government agencies. It gives all basic information for students to consult as prospective employees of the various agencies. Since government agency information is revised on an annual basis, new interns may elect to compile their own current notebook.

THE WORK EXPERIENCE

It is relatively easy for those of us in teaching to help students who are planning to become teachers of a foreign language, or another subject for that matter. These students can complete an internship which closely resembles those offered in the business world through their work in the foreign language department. They assist in the foreign language laboratory, in daily tasks (such as reproducing materials for FL instructors) or in tutoring. Their experience differs from a work-study assignment since they must have specialized FL skills and receive no pay. Material and documents available for them to consult regard certification requirements and regulations, including career guides published by organizations such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages and Modern Language Association. Publications of other professional organizations are provided for them to use (e.g., *The French Review, Foreign Language Annals, Hispania, The Modern Language Journal,* and *The TESOL Quarterly).* Students document their time in an annotated log which explains their activities/duties. Interns not planning to teach spend comparable time on an individual or a group project (examples follow).

INTERNSHIP PROJECTS: SOME CASE STUDIES

In the past two years there has been variety in the projects submitted for the FL internship. Students have been interested in business and teaching opportunities, government work, the field of mass communications, development issues and employment possibilities, health-related careers, and missionary work abroad or outreach programs for Hispanics in the United States.

A sampling of the projects clarifies the open and flexible nature of the FL internship and the need to screen students carefully so that only students who are capable of self-discipline and self-directed study sign up for the course. This need also surfaces in their individualized language/culture study.

Students have developed general projects directly related to their career goals or needs, such as the compilation of the Career Resource Notebook. One student planning to go into television broadcasting visited an Atlanta television station, interviewed the director/-producer, some of the guests and the crew of an Hispanic program, and reported on the taping of the program. An unusual opportunity presented itself for another student interested in studying environmental issues. The president of the college, who is very active in the international projects of the Rotary Club, sent a document to the language department for translation regarding an irrigation project in Honduras and indicated that the task could be used as a class/student project. The translation, which required advanced language skills, was completed by the intern through individual and group work and the assistance of the internship director. A student who is studying to become a physical therapist conducted a survey of local

physical therapists to determine (a) whether Spanish language skills are needed by therapists in our area, and (b) how therapists are coping if they need, but do not have, such skills. Her project included the identification of phrase books and other language materials which might be of interest to those entering the medical profession. A student preparing to enter the ministry compiled information regarding Hispanics in the United States and outreach programs of a religious nature which are serving them. Happily for current interns, one student's project in the fall of 1989 consisted of identifying and critiquing the Spanish language materials (books, tapes, programs, etc.) which have been made available for them to use in the language component of their internship. Current interns find her critiques useful when they are trying to locate a program which addresses their field of interest on their level of competence in the language. The information contained in her critique addresses both content and skill level. In addition, all components of each program available are listed, including answer keys.

LANGUAGE MATERIALS AND CROSS-CULTURAL INFORMATION

Students keep a log of their activities which documents and annotates their learning and practice in the language skill area as well as their cultural readings and progress on projects. A number of good programs for language practice have been identified, and materials are constantly added to those already available for interns to work with in the language laboratory area, or to check out if there is more than one copy or if the material is not needed by others. Only a couple of general programs will

be mentioned here. Almost any program can be adapted for a drill/practice/review approach, especially if it has accompanying workbooks and answer keys. Since the regular classes are currently using the *¿Qué tal?* series by Random House and the computer program which is provided with this series is housed in the Writing Lab, many students work with this series. Students have mentioned the following as some of the most helpful materials provided in addition to the textbook program: the *Basic Spanish Grammar Series* from D.C. Heath (the workbooks and accompanying cassettes relate to job-specific areas, e.g., Business and Finance, Social Services, Medicine, etc.), the *AMSCO* workbooks and program for listening comprehension, and various phrase books published for use with medical personnel.

Information relating to culture and cross-cultural communication (primarily in English and as readings) is available in the foreign language area as well. Students are encouraged to read from a variety of sources and may use the library itself as a resource. In the language resource area some of the most informative and well-documented cross-cultural information has come from the publications of Brigham Young University (e.g., their *Culturgrams*) and the Experiment in International Living. A number of their publications are housed in the foreign language resource area.

EVALUATIONS AND RAMIFICATIONS

How successful has the Internship Program for foreign language students been? The students address the value of the experience in an evaluation which is submitted at the end of the quarter in which they complete their

project and in a letter written to prospective interns. An intern going into teaching stated: ". . . it was a great help to have. . . Spanish and teaching methodology books at my disposal." A student interested in mass communication said: "A program like this has. . . unlimited potential in that it allows students to enjoy learning."He continued (in his letter to prospective future interns): ". . . what you put into the program is surely what you will get out of the program." One student specified the ways in which the internship helped him. He said: ". . . it has let me refresh the Spanish I learned in high school. . . it has helped me to develop good research habits in finding material. . . I have learned more about my preferred career as it associates with Spanish." The students who developed a career guide for government positions wrote: "We are convinced a foreign language should be considered. . . not merely an enhancement but. . . an essential part of ones' profile" and "We are grateful for having the unique opportunity to 'break ground' in the foreign language department by providing a career guide for students interested in government science."

It goes without saying that the internship program adds to the responsibilities of the teacher whose task is to assist students engaging in what is for many their first "independent study" project. The teacher must find time for conferences, as well as identify and provide appropriate materials in both the area of language skill development and practice and the area of career opportunities. In addition, materials for individual use must be adapted from materials which were originally designed for class work. Monitoring each intern's work requires the investment of additional hours in the language resource center. Such an assignment is a challenge, but the rewards are many. It is

truly a liberating experience for all and makes students aware of the "real world" in which they understand the need (and time required) to master a foreign language. Foreign language teachers who work with such a program cannot help but reaffirm their commitment to teach toward that end.